EXCUSE ME!

Novelized from the Comedy of the Same Name

By Rupert Hughes

ILLUSTRATED From Photographs of the Play as Produced By Henry W. Savage

CHAPTER XX.

Foiled Again.

Mallory tucked Marjorie under his arm and Marjorie tucked Snoozleums under hers, and they did a sort of three-legged race down the platform. The porter was pale blue with excitement, and it was with the last gasp of breath in all three bodies that they scrambled up the steps of the only open vestibule.

The porter was mad enough to give them a piece of his mind, and they were meek enough to take it without a word of explanation or resentment.

And the train sped on into the heart of Nebraska, along the unpoetic valley of the Platte. When luncheon time came, they ate it together, but in gloomy silence. They sat in Marjorie's berth throughout the appallingly monotonous afternoon in a stupor of disappointment and helpless dejection, speaking little and saying nothing then.

Whenever the train stopped, Mallory watched the on-getting passengers with his keenest eye. He had a theory that since most people who looked like preachers were decidedly lay, it might be well to take a gambler's chance and accost the least ministerial person next.

So, in his frantic anxiety, he selected a horsey-looking individual who got on at North Platte. He looked so much like a rawhided ranchman that Mallory stole up on him and asked him to excuse him, but did he happen to be a clergyman? The man replied by asking Mallory if he happened to be a flea-bitten maverick, and embellished his question with a copious flow of the words ministers use, but with a secular arrangement of them. In fact he split one word in two to insert a double-barrelled curse. All that Mallory could do was to admit that he was a flea-bitten what-he-said, and back away.

After that, if a vicar in full uniform had marched down the aisle heading a procession of choir-boys, Mallory would have suspected him. He vowed in his haste that Marjorie might die an old maid before he would approach anybody else on that subject.

Nebraska would have been a nice long state for a honeymoon, but its four hundred-odd miles were a dreary length for the couple so near and yet so far. The railroad clinging to the meandering Platte made the way far longer, and Mallory and Marjorie left like Pyramus and Thisbe wandering along an eternal wall, through which they could see, but not reach, one another.

They dined together as dolefully as if they had been married for forty years. Then the slow twilight soaked them in its melancholy. The porter lighted up the car, and the angels lighed up the stars, but nothing lighted up their hopes.

"We've got to quarrel again, my beloved," Mallory groaned to Marjorie.

Somehow they were too dreary even to nag one another with an outburst for the benefit of the eager-eyed passengers.

A little excitement bestirred them as they realized that they were confronted with another night-robeless night and a morrow without change of gear.

"What a pity that we left our things in the taxicab," Marjorie sighed. And this time she said, "we left them," instead of "you left them." It was very gracious of her, but Mallory did not acknowledge the courtesy. Instead he gave a start and a gasp:

"Good Lord, Marjorie, we never paid the second taxicab!"

"Great heavens, how shall we ever pay him? He's been waiting there twenty-four hours. How much do you suppose we owe him?"

"About a year of my pay, I guess."

"You must send him a telegram of apology and ask him to read his meter. He was such a nice man—the kindest eyes—for a chauffeur."

"But how can I telegraph him? I don't know his name, or his number, or his company, or anything."

"It's too bad. He'll go through life hating us and thinking we cheated him."

"Well, he doesn't know our names either."

And then they forgot him temporarily for the more immediate need of clothes. All the passengers knew that they had left behind what baggage they had not sent ahead, and much sympathy had been expressed. But most people would rather give you their sympathy than lend you their clothes. Mallory did not mind the men, but Marjorie dreaded the women. She was afraid of all of them but Mrs. Temple.

She threw herself on the little lady's mercy and was asked to help herself. She borrowed a nightgown of extraordinary simplicity, a shirt waist of an ancient mode, and a number of other things.

If there had been anyone there to see she would have made a most anachronistic bride.

Mallory canvassed the men and obtained a shockingly purple shirt from Wedgewood, who meant to put him at his ease, but somehow failed when he said in answer to Mallory's thanks:

"God bless my soul, old top, don't you think of thanking me. I ought to thank you. You see, the idiot who makes my shirts made that by mistake, and I'd be no end grateful if you'd jolly well take the loathsome thing off my hands. I mean to say, I shoudn't dream of being seen in it myself. You quite understand, don't you?"

Ashton contributed a maroon atrocity in hosiery, with equal tact:

"If they fit you, keep 'em. I got stung on that batch of socks. That pair was originally lavender, but they washed like that. Keep 'em. I wouldn't be found dead in 'em."

The mysterious Fosdick, who lived a lonely life in the Observation car and slept in the other sleeper, lent Mallory a pair of pyjamas evidently intended for a bridegroom of romantic disposition. Mallory blushed as he accepted them and when he found himself in them, he whisked out the light, he was so ashamed of himself.

Once more the whole car gaped at the unheard of behavior of its newly wedded pair. The poor porter had been hungry for a bridal couple, but as he went about gathering up the cast-off footwear of his large family and found Mallory's shoes at number three and Marjorie's tiny boots at number five, he shook his head and groaned.

"Times has suttainly changed for the wuss. If this is a bridal couple, gimme divorcees."

CHAPTER XXI.

Matrimony to and Fro.

And the next morning they were in Wyoming—well toward the center of that State. They had left behind the tame levels and the truly rural towns and they were among foothills and mountains, passing cities of wildly picturesque repute, like Cheyenne, and Laramie, Bowie, and Medicine Bow, and Bitter Creek, whose very names imply literature and war whoops, cowboy yelps, barking revolvers, another redskin biting the dust, cattle stampedes, town-paintings, humorous lynchings and bronchos in epileptic frenzy.

But the talk of this train was concerned with none of these wonders, which the novelists and the magazinist have perhaps a trifle overpublished. The talk of this train was concerned with the eighth wonder of the world, a semi-detached bridal couple.

Mrs. Whitcomb was eager enough to voice the sentiment of the whole populace, when she looked up from her novel in the observation room and, nudging Mrs. Temple, drawled: "By the way, my dear, has that bridal couple made up its second night's quarrel yet?"

"The Mallorys?" Mrs. Temple flushed as she answered, mercifully. "Oh, yes, they were very friendly again this morning."

Mrs. Whitcomb's countenance was cynical: "My dear, I've been married twice and I ought to know something about honeymoons, but this honeyless honeymoon—" she cast up her eyes and her hands in despair.

The women were so concerned about Mr. and "Mrs." Mallory, that they hardly noticed the uncomfortable plight of the Wellingtons, or the curious behavior of the lady from the stateroom who seemed to be afraid of something and never spoke to anybody. The strange behavior of Anne Gattle and Ira Lathrop even escaped much comment, though they were forever being stumbled on when anybody went out to the observation platform. When they were dislodged from there, they sat playing checkers and talking very little, but making eyes at one another and sighing like furnaces.

They had evidently concocted some secret of their own, for Ira, looking at his watch, murmured sentimentally to Anne: "Only a few hours more, Annie."

And Anne turned geranium-color and dropped a handful of checkers. "I don't know how I can face it."

Ira growled like a lovesick lion: "Aw, what do you care?"

"But I was never married before, Ira," Anne protested, "and on a train, too."

"Why, all the bridal couples take to the railroads."

"I should think it would be the last place they'd go," said Anne—a sensible woman, Anne! "Look at the Mallories—how miserable they are."

"I thought they were happy," said Ira, whose great virtue it was to pay little heed to what was none of his business.

"Oh, Ira," cried Anne, "I hope we shan't begin to quarrel as soon as we are married."

"As if anybody could quarrel with you, Anne," he said.

"Do you think I'll be so monotonous as that?" she retorted.

Her spunk delighted him beyond words. He whispered: "Anne, you're so gol-darned sweet if I don't get a chance to kiss you, I'll bust."

"Why, Ira—we're on the train."

"Da—darn the train! Who ever heard of a fellow proposing and getting engaged to a girl and not even kissing her."

"But our engagement is so short."

"Well, I'm not going to marry you until I get a kiss."

Perhaps innocent old Anne really believed this blood-curdling threat. It brought her instantly to terms, though she blushed: "But everybody's always looking."

"Come out on the observation platform."

"Oh, Ira, again?"

"I dare you."

"I take you—but" seeing that Mrs. Whitcomb was trying to overhear, she whispered: "Let's pretend it's the scenery."

So Ira rose, pushed the checkers aside, and said in an unusually positive tone: "Ah, Miss Gattle, won't you have a look at the landscape?"

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Lathrop," said Anne, "I just love scenery."

They wandered forth like the Sleeping Beauty and her princely awakener, and never dreamed what gigglings and nudgings and wise head-noddings went on back of them. Mrs. Wellington laughed loudest of all at the lovers whose heads had grown gray while their hearts were still so green.

It was shortly after this that the Wellingtons themselves came into prominence in the train life.

As the train approached Green River, and its copper-basined stream, the engineer began to set the air-brakes for the stop. Jimmie Wellington, boozily half-awake in the smoking room, wanted to know what the name of the station was. Everybody is always eager to oblige a drunken man, so Ashton and Fosdick tried to get a window open to look out.

The first one they labored at, they could not budge after a biceps-breaking tug. The second flew up with such ease that they went over backward. Ashton put his head out and announced that the approaching depot was labelled "Green River." Wellington burbled: "What a beautiful name for a shtation."

Ashton announced that there was something beautifuller still on the platform—"Oh, a peach!—a nectarine! and she's getting on this train."

Even Doctor Temple declared that she was a dear litte thing, wasn't she?

Wellington pushed him aside, saying: "Stand back Doc, and let me see; I have a keen sense of beau'ful."

"Be careful," cried the doctor, "he'll fall out of the window."

"Not out of that window," Ashton sagely observed, seeing the bulk of Wellington. As the train started off again, Little Jimmie distributed alcoholic smiles to the Green Riverers on the platform and called out:

"Good'bye, ever'body. You're all abslootly—ow— ow!" He clapped his hand to his eye and crawled back into the car, groaning with pain.

"What's the matter?" said Wedgewood. "Got something in your eye?"

"No, you blamed fool. I'm trying to look through my thumb."

"Poor fellow!" sympathized Doctor Temple, "it's a cinder!"

"A cinder! It's at leasht a ton of coal."

"I say, old boy, let me have a peek," said Wedgewood, screwing in his monocle and peering into the depths of Wellington's eye. "I can't see a bally thing."

"Of course not, with that blinder on," growled the miserable wretch, weeping in spite of himself and rubbing his smarting orb.

"Don't rub that eye," Ashton counselled, "rub the other eye."

"It's my eye; I'll rub it if I want to. Get me a doctor, somebody. I'm dying."

"Here's Doctor Temple," said Ashton, "right on the job." Wellington turned to the old clergyman with pathetic trust, and the deceiver writhed in his disguise. The best he could think of was: "Will somebody lend me a lead pencil?"

"What for?" said Wellington, uneasily.

"I am going to roll your upper lid up on it," said the Doctor.

"Oh, no, you're not," said the patient. "You can roll your own lids!"

Then the conductor, still another conductor, wandered on the scene and asked as if it were not a world-important matter: "What's the matter—pick up a cinder?"

"Yes. Perhaps you can get it out," the alleged doctor appealed.

The conductor nodded: "The best way is this—take hold of the winkers."

"The what?" mumbled Wellington.

"Grab the winkers of your upper eyelid in your right hand—"

"I've got 'em."

"Now grab the winkers of your lower eyelid in your left hand. Now raise the right hand, push the under lid under the overlid and haul the overlid over the underlid; when you have the overlid well over the under—"

Wellington waved him away: "Say, what do you think I'm trying to do? stuff a mattress? Get out of my way. I want my wife—lead me to my wife."

"An excellent idea," said Dr. Temple, who had been praying for a reconciliation.

He guided Wellington with difficulty to the observation room and, finding Mrs. Wellington at the desk as usual, he began: "Oh, Mrs. Wellington, may I introduce you to your husband"

Mrs. Wellington rose haughtily, caught a sight of her suffering consort and ran to him with a cry of "Jimmie!"

"Lucretia!"

"What's happened—are you killed?"

"I'm far from well. But don't worry. My life insurance is paid up."

"Oh, my poor little darling," Mrs. Jimmie fluttered, "What on earth ails you?" She turned to the doctor. "Is he going to die?"

"I think not," said the doctor. "It's only a bad case of cinder-in-the-eye-tis."

Thus reassured, Mrs. Wellington went into the patient's eye with her handkerchief. "Is that the eye?" she asked.

"No!" he howled, "the other one."

She went into that and came out with the cinder.

"There! It's just a tiny speck."

Wellington regarded the mote with amazement. "Is that all? It felt as if I had Pike's Peak in my eye." Then he waxed tender. "Oh, Lucretia, how can I ever—"

But she drew away with a disdainful: "Give me back my hand, please."

"Now, Lucretia," he protested, "don't you think you're carrying this pretty far?"

"Only as far as Reno," she answered grimly, which stung him to retort: "You'd better take the beam out of your own eye, now that you've taken the cinder out of mine," but she, noting that they were the center of interest, observed: "All the passengers are enjoying this, my dear. You'd better go back to the cafe."

Wellington regarded her with a revulsion to wrath. He thundered at her: "I will go back, but allow me to inform you, my dear madam, that I'll not drink another drop—just to surprise you."

Mrs. Wellington shrugged her shoulders at this ancient threat and Jimmie stumbled back to his lair, whither the men followed him. Feeling sympathy in the atmosphere, Little Jimmie felt impelled to pour out his grief:

"Jellmen, I'm a brok'n-heartless man. Mrs. Well'n'ton is a queen among women, but she has temper of tarant—"

Wedgewood broke in: "I say, old boy, you've carried this ballast for three days now, wherever did you get it?"

Wellington drew himself up proudly for a moment before he slumped back into himself. "Well, you see, when I announced to a few friends that I was about to leave Mrs. Well'n'ton forever and that I was going out to—to—you know.'

"Reno. We know. Well?"

"Well, a crowd of my friends got up a farewell sort of divorce breakfast—and some of 'em felt so very sad about my divorce that they drank a little too much, and the rest of my friends felt so very glad about my divorce, that they drank a little too much. And, of course, I had to join both parties."

"And that breakfast," said Ashton, "lasted till the train started, eh?"

Wellington glowered back triumphantly. "Lasted till the train started? Jellmen, that breakfast is going yet!"

To be Continued

PAPER BAG COOKING

Great System Perfected by M. Soyer, Famous London Chef.

NOURISHING BEEF DISHES.

By Martha McCulloch Williams.

I wonder how many careful housemothers know stuffed roast beef? To make it get two flank steaks of generous size, sew them together with clean strong cotton and stuff bag thus formed in any way you like. Tie up the steaks. Butter them well over the outside. Slip into a well buttered paper bag plenty large enough to hold them, add a tablespoonful of water, cook in a hot oven three minutes, then turn off the heat more than half and cook for forty minutes more. Very heavy steaks may take longer, and light ones a shorter time. Sliced onions laid around the steak will flavor the meat and the gravy. This dish can be left standing in the bag quite a while after cooking. Heating it up makes it as good as ever.

Take four pounds of round beef—the best cut. Rub over liberally with butter or clarified drippings, but do not salt, and put into a bag, which has been thickly buttered, along with half a can of tomatoes or three large fresh ones, peeled and chopped, one minced onion, one small red pepper, three cloves and six grains of alspice. Score the beef lightly on top so as to press the spices into it. Cover it with the tomatoes, onion, etc., and lay on them a lump of butter or dripping rolled in salted flour. Add a tablespoonful of vinegar and water mixed. Seal bag tight, and cook very slowly for three hours. A gas jet turned half down gives about the right heat. Take from the bag, pour out the gravy—in a saucepan if you want it thickened with browned flour; otherwise, in the boat. The meat will be very tender and delicious.

Yorkshire pudding does not absolutely demand cooking underneath a roast. To go with this round roast, you can make it thus. Beat two eggs separately very light, then add to them alternately a cup of sweet milk and two cups of flour, sifted with half a teaspoonful salt, and a teaspoonful baking powder. Mix smoothly, pour into a very well greased bag, seal, allowing room for rising, lay flat on a wire mat and cook for twenty-five minutes in a fairly hot oven.

Meat roll is a good end for cold lean roast beef. Mince or grind it fine, season with salt, pepper, tiny bits of butter, a little lemon juice and a pinch of powdered herbs. Roll out puff paste to less than a quarter inch thickness. Make it in long strips. Spread the meat thinly upon them, roll up, pinch the ends together tight, put in a buttered bag with a little stock or water or left over gravy, also a small lump of butter, seal and cook till the pastry is brown—the time depending somewhat on the size and number of the rolls.

A PAPER BAG DINNER.

By Nicolas Sayer, Chef of Brooks' Club, London.

Duckling with Turnips: Thoroughly butter a paper bag, place the duckling inside, cut a few slices of carrot and turnip into fancy shapes, cut up a few blanched spring onions, and add a bouquet garni. Pour in three tablespoonfuls of tomato sauce and a wineglassful of Madeira. Season with salt and pepper according to taste. Cook for forty-five to fifty-five minutes, according to the size of the bird.

Chicken a la Reine: Take a fowl trussed as for boiling, and rub it well over with a split onion. Place it in a well-greased bag and add to it a gill of good stock. Add also a sprig of parsley, a bay leaf, a sprig of sweet herbs, and, if obtainable, two or three spring onions, all tied together. Take four ounces of well-cooked rice and add it to the fowl. Place the bag on the broiler, simmer very slowly in a moderate oven until the fowl is cooked, then dish up the fowl on a hot dish, remove the herbs and empty the rice into a fresh bag. Add to it a tablespoonful of stock, a gill of cream, a little grated lemon peel, a dust of nutmeg, and pepper and salt to taste. Mix thoroughly, add the well-beaten yolk of an egg, make hot again on the broiler and serve at once.

Turkey and fillet of veal are both excellent cooked after this recipe.

Lima Beans: Take a quart of Lima beans, add two ounces of butter, four ounces of diced ham, a little sugar and salt, a teaspoonful of flour and sweet herbs to taste. Put in a greased bag with half a pint of water and cook for sixty minutes in a moderate oven.

Spinach: Pick over and thoroughly wash two pounds of spinach, leave the vegetable as wet as you can, and put it in a bag. Add a pinch of sugar and a litle salt. Seal the bag and cook for thirty-five minutes. Then stand the broiler bearing the bag over a large plate, and prick the bottom of the bag in such a way as to allow all the water to run out.

Fruit Salad: Take four peeled and thinly sliced bananas, half a pound of well washed and dried Hamburg grapes, ditto strawberries, an apple, and two large oranges. Pinch each grape slightly. Hull the strawberries, peel and slice the apple and oranges very thinly. Mix all well together in a deep bowl. Pour over a small bottle of raspberry syrup and a tablespoonful of brandy. Mix well. Leave on ice till needed.

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Cloverport Churches

Baptist Church

Baptist Sunday School, 9:30 a. m. C. E. Lightfoot, Superintendent. Prayer Meeting Wednesday 7:30 p. m. Baptist Aid Society Society meets Monday after Second Sunday, every month, Mrs. A. B. Skillman, President Preaching every Second and Fourth Sunday. Rev. E. O. Cottrell, Pastor.

Methodist Church

Methodist Sunday School, 9:30 a. m. Ira D. Heben, Superintendent. Preaching every Sunday at 11 a. m. and 7:30 p. m. Frank Lewis Pastor. Prayer meeting Wednesday, 7:30 p. m. Epworth League, regular service Sunday 6:45 p. m; business meeting first Tuesday night each month. Miss Margarite Burn, President. Ladies' Aid Society meets first Monday each month, Mrs. Forrest Lightfoot, President. Ladies' Missionary Society meets Second Sunday in every month, Mrs. Virgil Babbage, President. Choir practice Friday night 7:30, A. H. Murray, Director.

Presbyterian Church

Presbyterian Sunday School 9:45 a. m.—Conrad Sippel, Superintendent. Preaching every Third Sunday, Rev. Adair, Minister. Prayer meeting Tuesday, 7:30 p. m. Ladies' Aid Society meets Wednesday after Third Sunday every month, Mrs Chas. Satterfield, President.

Catholic Church

First Sunday of each month, Mass, Sermon, and Benediction, 9:00 a. m., other three Sundays at 10:15 a. m. On week days Mass at 7:00 a. m. Catechetical Instruction for the children on Saturdays at 8:30 a. m., and on Sundays at 9:30 a. m. and 2:30 p. m.

Bertie Wants Home News.

Dear Mr. Babbage: Enclosed you will find order for one year's subscription to the dear old News that comes like a letter from home each week. As ever your friend, V. Spottsman, 5314 East End Ave., Chicago.

The above letter is from Bertie Spottsman, colored, who is getting along nicely in the big city.

Sues On Mortgages.

Suit has been filed in the circuit court by Mrs. Eliza L. Webb and Courtland Haynes against Mrs. Louise Adair and Pope McAdams as executors of the estate of I. C. Adair and Mrs. Mary C. Adair for the foreclosure of mortgages that they hold against two tracts of land, one of 19 acres and the other of 100 acres, near town. One is the Dr. Holmes place and the other is the Geo. Bruner place, both on the hill. Mrs. Webb's notes are for $1,250 with two years interest past due, and Mr. Haynes' note is for $486 with several credits. The notes were given by I. C. Adair and wife and the title was in them. Last April J. S. Adair made a deed to the property to his wife, Mary C. Adair, claiming it under a will of the late I. C. Adair, who was a brother, and it is because of this attempted transfer that Mary C. Adair is made a defendant. J. D. Kelly is representing the plaintiffs.—Clarion.